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Comparing the Chinese Dream with the American Dream

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Comparison of the Chinese Dream with the American Dream reveals that the Chinese Dream has four main themes: national rejuvenation, common prosperity, democracy, and the people's happiness; whereas, the American Dream emphasizes personal liberty, individual success, and upward social and economic mobility. Investigation of the historical origins and development of the two dreams, conjoined with an account of their aims and purposes, shows that full realization of the Chinese Dream is achieved by successfully building socialism with Chinese characteristics; the American Dream, by contrast, serves as an ideological prop for a particularly aggressive, predatory, and imperialistic form of capitalism. Furthermore, a comparison of each dream in actual practice shows that the Chinese Dream of fully developed socialism has been more successful at promoting common prosperity and peaceful, sustainable development, while the American Dream of unbridled capitalism encourages unsustainable development, growing poverty and inequality, and imperialist wars. Finally, an enumeration of the fundamental differences between the Chinese and American Dreams concludes that the Chinese Dream is fundamentally benign, whereas the American Dream is basically malignant. In order for the American Dream to shed its harmful characteristics, it must reject its capitalist underpinnings and adopt socialism as its ultimate goal.

Keywords: Chinese Dream; American Dream; socialism with Chinese characteristics; capitalism

The Ontological Status of National Dreams

The very act of comparing the Chinese Dream and the American Dream introduces problematic terminology. To some critics the problem of defining the ontological status of dreams attributed to nations or other groups will be viewed as sufficiently intractable to warrant abandonment of this project at the outset. The source of the problem is the meaning of the word “dream.” In common parlance, dreams, understood as the images, thoughts, and sensations experienced by the human mind during sleep, are had by individuals. Nations and countries obviously do not sleep, nor do they dream. Therefore, to speak of national dreams such as the Chinese Dream or the American Dream can seem like an abuse of language and the discussion of nonsense masquerading as meaningful discourse. It has already been noted that some will view these problems as impossible to overcome. Nonetheless, this kind of criticism can itself be criticized as being too quick to dismiss a potentially fruitful line of research. To immediately reject the discussion of national or other collective dreams as nonsensical reveals a type of reductionistic pedantry which is unable to distinguish the variant meanings of the word “dream” and which rashly conflates the various meaningful uses of the word with one restricted meaning that refers exclusively to mental states

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experienced during the sleep cycle. It is a mistake to privilege the “sleep-cycle” understanding of the word “dream” over all other legitimate meanings; a mistake that betrays ignorance of language’s flexibility and richness, regardless of whether the language in question is Chinese or English.

Obviously another meaningful use of the word “dream” is in play here. This is the use of “dream” and related terms to refer to collective dreams, including national dreams such as the Chinese Dream and the American Dream. Such dreams have nothing to do with individual sleep states. Granted, it is legitimate to ask for clarification of the ontological status of collective dreams and explanation of how they can be differentiated from dreams during sleep. This is not difficult to do.

The use of dream terminology to refer to collective dreams does not involuntarily commit the user to making problematic references to the mind’s experiences during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, and it clearly does not lead to absurd assertions about national or otherwise collective REM states and accompanying dreams of the sort experienced by sleeping individuals. When speaking of collective dreams, we denote cherished ideals, aspirations, or ambitions held by groups of persons who share a particular culture, political outlook, or some other set of aspirations or principles. In this sense, “dream” denotes shared ideals or beliefs that are held or advocated by the members of specific groups, often with an eye towards encouraging the adoption of the standards or principles in question by the wider culture. We characterize dreams in this sense as ideological constructs; verbal formulas created and propagated to achieve political objectives linked to particular class interests. By performing promotional and legitimizing functions, these ideologically charged “dreams” assist the political ascendancy of specific social classes by popularizing their principles and aspirations. Here the word “dream” functions as a synonym for ideology. What distinguishes this particular type of ideological discourse is the tendency of its advocates to couch the ideology in dream language. When we speak of the Chinese Dream or the American Dream, we are really referring to Chinese and American dream ideologies, or to specific ideological formulae, couched in dream terminology, that are components of broader, overarching Chinese and American ideologies.

The Problem of Idealism

There is another important aspect to the question of the ontological status of dream terminology. In speaking of the social and historical influence of the Chinese and American Dreams, as well as the social significance of collective dreams in general, the author may seem committed to a form of philosophical idealism that treats ideas in the form of dreams as if they were active historical subjects. Idealism is the belief that ideas are spiritual substances that exist independently of the material world, but which nevertheless exercise decisive influence on the evolution of matter in all of its manifestations including both natural and human history. To the philosophical idealist, the material world is an epiphenomenon, a secondary effect or byproduct, of the activities of the spiritual world. The role of Plato’s ideas or archetypes in bringing about, governing the development, and sustaining the existence of the material world, the role of various immaterial deities in the theistic religions, and Hegel’s view that the preordained consummation of the history of civilization consists of the realization of the Idea of Freedom, are all examples of philosophical idealism.

The present author’s view, which we shall call philosophical materialism, is that ideas are epiphenomena of the operations of material substances and are themselves material substances. This is the exact opposite of idealism as characterized above. The fact that this paper contains much talk of the importance and socio-historical significance of national dreams and other ideal constructs, might lead the reader to believe that the author is a philosophical idealist who thinks that disembodied ideas play the decisive role in the development of history, society, and all other aspects of the material world. On the contrary, the author is a convinced materialist who

believes, in opposition to idealism, that ideas and the minds which produce and perceive them are themselves material substances, that ideas and minds have no existence independent of matter, and that therefore ideologies and other ideal constructs influence the historical process strictly as material forces wielded by individuals and groups in pursuit of their perceived individual and class interests.

Much of the problem of idealism raised by this subject is a function of the natural ambiguity of language, but if we believe firmly, as the present author does, in a real and significant difference between words and their referents, and if we apply this distinction to the topic at hand, we can avoid being misled into idealism by the vagueness of language. There is no reason to believe that talk of this or that national dream, without any real intent to advance an idealistic position, actually involves the author in philosophical idealism. To be an idealist one must consciously affirm idealism's core belief about the independent existence of ideal substances, otherwise an author's idealistic-sounding expressions are merely figures of speech used for the sake of convenience.

To reiterate: the author is a materialist, not an idealist, and any expression contained in this paper which seems to indicate otherwise is merely language which might seem idealist in connotation but which is absolutely not in denotation. Although the author has tried assiduously to avoid idealist-type language, perhaps such talk inevitably seeps into a paper that is heavily focused on the roles and effects of ideology. The author takes full responsibility for any remaining idealistic-sounding discourse, while urging the reader to focus on the substance of the language in question rather than solely on its form. To reiterate: in discussing the Chinese and American Dreams, this paper is concerned with ideology as a material force and its role in influencing class conflicts that in turn drive the material process of socio-historical development. It is not a discussion of the influence of ideas as independent historical subjects.

The major differences between these contrasting ideological constructs which we call the Chinese and American Dreams can be attributed to the different historical circumstances, cultural characteristics, ideological climates and class interests that have influenced the social evolution of the People's Republic of China and the United States of America, and which have led to the formation of the two different systems of socialism with Chinese characteristics and American capitalism. Any fruitful comparison of the Chinese Dream with the American Dream must juxtapose these two overarching visions of ultimate human aspirations. In order to conduct an enlightening examination of the Chinese and American Dreams, we must consider the origin and development of the two dreams, clarify their meaning and content, and evaluate the success of each society in living up to the ideals proclaimed by its respective dream.

The American Dream: An Overview

The American Dream represents the ideals of a society that allows maximum personal liberty for each individual to pursue their private interests and ambitions and to achieve individual material success and upward social mobility in the context of a capitalist system with a bourgeois democratic government.

The American Dream was not fully formulated until the twentieth century, but traces of some of its ideological elements were part of the intellectual climate of colonial America prior to the American revolution and thus before the founding of the United States of America as an independent nation. An important nascent element of the American Dream can be found in the yearning for religious freedom and liberty of conscience among the original Pilgrim settlers of America who fled religious persecution in England. An important component of Pilgrim ideology was their self-proclaimed right to found, in the supposedly uninhabited and untamed wilderness of America, their own "shining city upon a hill" in which each citizen would enjoy the right to practice Puritanism in an environment free of persecution—at least of orthodox Puritans, that is.

Eventually, liberty of the individual conscience in matters of religion would be transformed by America's ruling classes and their intellectual fellow travelers into the liberty of property owners to practice unbridled capitalism—but we are getting ahead of ourselves. During colonial America's revolutionary period, the idea of religious freedom as the key component of American liberty was de-emphasized, and the prevailing idea of liberty was reinterpreted to reflect the desire of America's slave-owning, landed aristocracy for independence from Great Britain and freedom from British taxation of their wealth. The colonial ruling class's wish for national independence was expressed in terms of the extreme individualism of Anglo-Saxon culture; thus, the idea of American nationhood was centered on the ideal of a society that provides maximum liberty for each individual to pursue their personal goals and to achieve unlimited material prosperity through their own efforts in an environment of strictly limited interference from the central government. Such an ideology has an obvious appeal to a small, property-owning colonial elite that feels repressed and abused by the government of its mother country. It must be noted, however, that this early ideology of liberty coexisted with chattel slavery and the subordination of the common people to the colonial elite, because American liberty, while universal in word, was indeed fully enjoyed only by the ruling class.

By the early twentieth century, America's ideology of liberty had switched emphasis to blatantly bourgeois ideals regarding the pursuit of career and financial success and material plenty in the form of conspicuous consumerism in urban and town settings. This change reflected the transformation of America from an agrarian society to a full-fledged industrial capitalist country. Various nascent American Dream notions of worldly success were propagandized as proper aspirations for the common people, although this was belied by the fact that African Americans, Native Americans, immigrants of many nationalities, and women were—and continue to be—denied the basic civil rights outlined in the US Constitution and equal opportunities to education and employment.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, America's capitalist ruling class faced the gravest threat to its rule in its entire history. In the face of massive unemployment, drastically declining living standards, and the apparent economic success of the Soviet model, the American people had to be convinced to remain on the capitalist road. A mass campaign on behalf of the American Dream was an important part of this propaganda effort. It was during the depression that the term "American Dream" was first popularized by James Truslow Adams (1931) in his book *The Epic of America*. Up to that time, what we know as the American Dream was an amorphous collection of ideas and sentiments regarding personal freedom and economic opportunity. Before its popularization, the term American Dream was sometimes used to refer to this loose amalgamation of ideas, but it coexisted with such terms as "Americanism" and the "American Way." There was a need for clarification and consolidation of these ideas under a memorable ideological slogan that would encourage the preservation of the social status quo while infusing people's imaginations with hope for the future. The phrase "American Dream" fit the bill, and propagandists such as James Truslow Adams rose to the occasion. Attempting to shore up the American people's flagging confidence in capitalism, Adams explained that the American Dream

... is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position. (Adams 1931, 214–15)

In Adams's view, the American Dream is mainly about opportunity for personal growth and upward social mobility rather than crass materialism and consumerism. This is evident in another passage in which Adams wrote that the American Dream

... has not been a dream of mere material plenty, though that has doubtlessly counted heavily. It has been much more than that. It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in the older civilizations. (Adams 1931, 416)

Taken out of its historical and social context, the American Dream seems innocuous, even progressive. After all, who would not be in favor of individual opportunity and success? Nevertheless, the American Dream takes on a darker hue when we consider its easy co-existence with Jim Crow laws, systematic discrimination against non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, and its role in propping up capitalism and imperialism. As previously noted, the dream was presented to the American people in its modern form during the depths of the Great Depression, the most desperate economic crisis that US capitalism has ever faced. The US economy was devastated by the collapse of the financial system, massive deflation, and 25% unemployment; hunger and homelessness stalked the land, and socialist ideas were making serious inroads among the American working class. The idea of the American Dream was promulgated at this time of crisis. It promised American workers that if they kept their faith in capitalism and kept working hard within the system, they would enjoy a chicken in every pot, a car in every garage, and a tidy suburban house with a white picket fence. That is what the exponents of the American Dream have told the people to this very day. The main difference is that the visions of material abundance have grown more opulent and decadent over time.

As with many ideas born of fear and panic, the American Dream has an “every-man-for-himself” quality, like the desperate advice shouted to the fleeing occupants of a burning building or a sinking ship. Perhaps fear and insecurity are the sources of its excessive individualism, its nearly exclusive focus on an atomistic personal freedom, individual achievement, individual prosperity, individual glory, and an extreme version of the doctrine of individual responsibility. After all, when people can count on little or nothing from society except the liberty to compete with one another, they must rely entirely on themselves for their survival and success. This is worth noting, for another prominent feature of the American Dream is that responsibility for success or failure rests entirely on the shoulders of the individual. You owe nothing to society for your success and society owes you nothing, regardless of whether you succeed or fail. This extreme individualism turns everyone into a competitor and potential enemy of everyone else, as well as an enemy of society, and social life becomes a war of each against all. Like the case of the criminal Wall Street bankers who destroyed the US economy in 2008, if the success of a few depends on the failure of everyone else, then so be it, for those failed people cannot be regarded as true friends, family, or countrymen; they are merely competitors who must be beaten at all costs. These conditions play out similarly in America’s international relations, in that the ruling class views other countries, particularly those who do not embrace capitalist globalization under US hegemony, as competitors and enemies. The US ruling class pursues a policy of American Dream-style capitalism at home and imperialism abroad, all the while claiming that America’s militarized economy and perpetual wars are necessary to protect the American way of life from foreign threats.

The Chinese Dream: An Overview

The ideological concept of the Chinese Dream is deeply rooted in the desire of the Chinese people for rejuvenation and recovery from the Century of Humiliation during which China was bullied, colonized, and brutalized by foreign powers. From the beginning of the First Opium War in 1839, to the Taiping Rebellion, to the First Sino-Japanese War, to the advent of the May 4th Movement in 1919, to the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the beginning of Communist rule in 1949, the

Chinese people have been presented with many and varied ideological exhortations urging them to pursue collective aspirations for genuine national independence, common prosperity, and the recovery of the Chinese nation from colonization and the remnants of feudal backwardness.

We shall see that the contemporary version of the Chinese Dream, as popularized by President Xi Jinping, brings the various elements of the Chinese people's aspirations together to encompass several major themes, including, but not limited to, the Chinese people's endeavor to achieve peaceful, sustainable development; common prosperity; and independence and freedom from foreign domination through the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and a people's democracy guided by the Communist Party of China.

President Xi Jinping's recent statements of the Chinese Dream build upon the original Chinese Dream of the May 4th patriots. Today's Chinese Dream is not a sterile, manufactured concoction imposed upon the people from on high. The concept of the Chinese Dream has deep roots in Chinese history and culture, roots in the people's long and difficult struggle against poverty, backwardness, feudalism, and imperialism.

Xi Jinping made his first statement on the Chinese Dream in November 2012 soon after his election as General Secretary of the Communist Party of China and Chairman of the CPC Central Military Commission. He said: "The great revival of the Chinese nation is the greatest Chinese Dream" (Stout 2013). In his first address to the Chinese people after becoming President of the People's Republic of China in March 2013, Xi stated: "We must make persistent efforts, press ahead with indomitable will, continue to push forward the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and strive to achieve the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (*BBC News* 2013). Xi has also remarked that: "To realize a healthy society, to build a rich democratic culture and peaceful society is a goal the country struggles to achieve. The Chinese people's biggest hope is to realize national wealth, social development, and happiness" (*US-China Perception Monitor* 2013). In August 2013, President Xi commented that: "Realizing the Chinese dream of the great national rejuvenation would mean China's becoming a prosperous country, a revitalized nation, and having happy people" (Rajan 2013).

The Chinese Dream also includes goals to be achieved within specific timeframes, such as two major milestones called the "Two One-Hundreds." Regarding these objectives Xi said: "We will surely complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects when the CPC celebrates its centenary, and turn China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious when the PRC marks its centennial" (*China Daily* 2013). The goal of the first one-hundred refers to achieving moderate prosperity, defined as per capita GDP of around 20,000 USD, by the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China in 2021 (Kuhn 2013). The second one-hundred is the goal of completing modern, socialist development in China by the year 2049, which is the 100th anniversary of the People's Republic of China.

These statements show that the Chinese Dream has four major themes: national rejuvenation, common prosperity, democracy, and happiness. Taken together, these themes present a vision of successfully developed socialism. The Chinese Dream encompasses all of the benefits that will be enjoyed by the Chinese people through the full development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Thus, the Chinese Dream is a socialist dream; the Chinese Dream and socialism with Chinese characteristics are united as one in that realization of the dream depends on the successful development of socialism. Socialism with Chinese characteristics pursues peaceful development and common prosperity by using market mechanisms to build the productive forces while ensuring the socialist orientation of development. It does this by retaining the dominant role of public enterprises in key economic sectors and preserving the leading role of the Communist Party. The rejuvenation of the Chinese nation depends on supporting the goals and methods of socialism with Chinese characteristics and safeguarding the four cardinal principles of upholding socialism,

building people's democracy, maintaining the leading role of the Communist Party, and creatively developing and applying Marxism to Chinese conditions.

The Chinese Dream is indeed the collective dream of the Chinese nation, but this does not mean that it excludes or devalues the dreams of individuals. The Chinese Dream is the dream of achieving socialism with Chinese characteristics, which unites the well being of the individual and the larger society in a dialectical unity where the happiness of the whole depends on the happiness of the parts. Xi Jinping addressed the role of the individual when he said that the Chinese Dream "is a dream of the whole nation, as well as of every individual" (*Global Times* 2013). Without the realization of the Chinese Dream at the national level—of a strong, prosperous, and fully sovereign socialist homeland—individual dreams of happiness and fulfillment cannot be realized. Likewise, in the Chinese Dream "everyone has the right to seek his or her dream and be the builder of their own dreams" (*Global Times* 2013). The creative energy of 1.3 billion individual dreams contributes to the well being of society. Therein lies the complementary relationship among the individual and collective Chinese Dreams. At the collective level, the complete development of socialism provides national independence and security, democracy, employment, education, healthcare, housing and general prosperity, without which no individual dream can be achieved. In turn, the determination, hard work, creativity, and pioneering spirit of 1.3 billion people pursuing their own dreams drives society forward to fully developed socialism.

In sum, the "Chinese Dream" denotes the great endeavor of the Chinese people to rejuvenate the Chinese nation and achieve prosperity, democracy, and happiness by fully developing socialism with Chinese characteristics. This includes achieving the "Two One-Hundreds" through increasing national strength and achieving moderate prosperity for the whole people by deepening the reform and opening up process, transforming the economic growth pattern from overreliance on production for export to increasing production for domestic consumption, developing socialist democracy, and achieving sustainable economic and social development in order to realize the rejuvenation, aspirations, and happiness of the Chinese people.

The American Dream in Practice

The American Dream of individual success within the capitalist system has always told the American people that if they just stick with the system, everyone will benefit in the end, despite capitalism's excessive individualism, imperialistic tendencies, and persistent poverty and inequality. Marxist social science has proven time and again that capitalism promotes debilitating inequality, excessive concentration of wealth, immiseration of the working class, imperialism, fascism, and wars of aggression. It is common knowledge in America that the people's opportunities to achieve the trappings of the American Dream are becoming increasingly elusive. Incomes for all but the top 1% of the population have been stagnant for 40 years, homeownership is declining to the lowest rates in over a decade (*BBC News* 2014), rates of poverty and violence in the United States are among the highest of the advanced countries, and rates of social mobility are among the lowest. Young Americans today can expect to be worse off economically than their parents.

An overview of growing poverty and economic stagnation in the United States highlights the declining capacity of US capitalism to keep the promises of the American Dream ideology. In fall 2011, the US Census Bureau reported 46.2 million Americans living below the official poverty line (Tavernise 2011). That is approximately 15% of the population of the world's wealthiest and most powerful country, and the highest number since the Census Bureau began publishing poverty statistics 52 years ago; the median annual income of a male full-time worker in the United States at \$47,715 was actually lower than in 1973 when it was \$49,065 (in 2010 dollars) (Tavernise 2011). This means no real income increases in over 30 years. The United States certainly has a long way to go before it is in danger of losing its status as a high-income

country, but the stagnating incomes of the US working class do not bode well for the country's future. In 2011, the Census Bureau also reported that approximately 50 million Americans had no health insurance (Tavernise 2011), up from 46 million in 2008 (Galewitz and Villegas 2010). The new health care law (The Affordable Care Act) that was signed by US President Obama in March 2010 was supposed to provide coverage to 36 million uninsured people when it took full effect in the spring of 2014 (Wolf 2010); as of August 2014 the law has extended coverage to approximately 10 million uninsured people (Young 2014). Despite healthcare reform, several tens of millions of the US population are likely to remain permanently uninsured because implementation of the healthcare law has been delayed, weakened, and obstructed by state and local governments. Under America's federal, separated-powers system, reactionary state and local governments have the power to obstruct or ignore progressive national legislation. The history of attempts to reform America's infamously expensive, inefficient, and exclusive health care system shows that in the world's leading capitalist country, actions taken by the people's elected national representatives to provide health coverage to tens of millions of uninsured people can be thwarted by extreme individualist, anti-working class reactionaries at the state and local levels. Ultimate responsibility for this lies with America's bourgeois democracy, which is designed to silence the voice of the people, deny their basic needs, and thwart progressive efforts by any elected officials who make sincere efforts to improve the people's living standards.

Some recent reports on poverty and inequality in the United States show that seven years after the Great Recession began in December 2007 the country is still experiencing a crippled labor market, rising poverty, and increasing income and wealth inequality. For example, by November 2013, prime-age employment (ages 25–54) was still well below its pre-recession level, having declined by 5% since December 2007 (Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality 2014, 5). The fact that prime-age employment has failed to recover since the official end of the Great Recession in June 2009 shows that the United States is plagued by long-term unemployment. Furthermore, the official US poverty rate, which was 12.5% in 2007, was still at 15% in 2012; and the child poverty rate, which was 18% in 2007, reached 21.8% in 2012 (5). Income inequality in the United States has increased sharply since 2007. In the summer of that year, median household income in the United States stood at \$56,100; in October 2013, median income was \$52,300, or 7% below the pre-recession figure (31). The bulk of the income decrease was suffered by the lower and middle-income quintiles. From 2007 to 2012, the share of income going to the lowest quintile fell approximately 9%; the second quintile fell 5%, the middle remained flat, and the top quintile rose by about 3% (31). Growing income inequality in the United States is not only a phenomenon of the Great Recession and its aftermath; rather, it is a long-term trend. Since 1968, the income share of the bottom quintile has declined by 43%, the second by 25%, and the middle by almost 15%, while the top has increased by 20% (31). Clearly, the United States is a country in which the rich are getting ever richer and the poor and middle-income groups are getting poorer. Median wealth declined by 47% from 2007 to 2010, but mean wealth fell by only 18% (37). This is consistent with rising wealth inequality. Middle-income quintiles were hardest hit due to their high ratio of debt to net worth and sharply declining home values.

The United States also exhibits sharp racial divisions in the distribution of wealth. From 2007 to 2010 the Black/White net worth ratio decreased from 19% to 14% and the Hispanic/White ratio dropped from 26% to 15% (Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality 2014, 40–41). This shows that in a country where the poor and middle-income groups are increasingly worse off, racial and ethnic minorities are the worst off of all. Persistent and increasing poverty and inequality in the United States show that the country's capitalist system, and the bourgeois democracy that keeps the representatives of capitalism in power, is incapable of providing the material basis for the

realization of the American Dream. It is highly probable that the American Dream will remain a chimera as long as the United States remains a capitalist country.

This should not come as a surprise to those who have avoided being brainwashed and bewildered by the disorienting illusion of the American Dream. From its very beginnings, Marxist social science has used logical analysis of the basic economic laws of capitalism, backed up by historical data, to show that capitalism produces vast inequalities of wealth. But up until now the historical reach of the data has been limited. This changed with the publication of Thomas Piketty's (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, which is the first comprehensive synthesis of international data on income and wealth from the early days of capitalism to the present.¹ Piketty shows that from the nineteenth century to around 1930, capitalist development produced extremely high inequality. For example, by 1930 the top income decile in the United States received just under 50% of national income. This slowly declined to 35% by 1980 and thereafter began a steep ascent back to the 50% level in 2008 (Piketty 2014, 24, figure I.I.). Other major capitalist countries such as Britain and France show a similar trend. Piketty's book was received with shock, skepticism, and dismay in the United States, where it became a major bestseller nevertheless. What other reaction could be expected from a population brought up over many decades of indoctrination in the American Dream to believe that capitalism delivers opportunity and prosperity to everyone, that it is a rising tide that lifts all boats?

The recent near collapse of global capitalism, which was precipitated by rampant corruption in the US financial sector, stands in sharp contrast to the stable economic performance of the major socialist countries and reveals that the capitalist world, due to its own self-destructive tendencies, has painted itself into an extremely tight socioeconomic corner. It can emerge from this impasse stronger and less corrupt only if it can bring itself to adopt socialism; but the capitalist world can only move toward socialism against the desperate and unprincipled resistance of its ruling classes. The struggle for socialism in the capitalist countries will be protracted because there are powerful forces arrayed against it. These forces strive to ensure that the pleas of their people for peace, jobs, and social progress are answered by a brutal and crippling austerity, stepped up exploitation, increasing repression at home, and the continuation of imperialist wars abroad.

Behind its progressive, non-ideological *façade*, the American Dream is virulently antisocialist and anticommunist. The major capitalist countries, led by the United States, are making herculean efforts to bring about the bourgeois liberalization of the remaining socialist countries. The United States wants them to repudiate the leading role of their communist parties, abandon the path of socialist development, abolish the people's democratic dictatorship, and discard Marxism-Leninism. Bourgeois liberalization aims to replace socialism with the most vicious and exploitive forms of capitalism, and place countries on the road to unsustainable development, territorial break up, subordination to imperialism, and descent into fascism and war. By destroying the people's democratic dictatorship, bourgeois liberalization puts whole societies under the rule of capitalist gangsters. The breakup of socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe shows that when the leadership of the communist party is repudiated, the state becomes the executive committee of the bourgeoisie; it then abandons the people's progressive political agenda in favor of the reactionary schemes of short-term profit maximization. By renouncing the progressive philosophy of Marxism-Leninism, it surrenders the people to superstition, despairing nihilism, unscientific reactionary ideologies, and a vulgar, profit-serving pragmatism. In China's case, bourgeois liberalization would mean abandoning the Chinese Dream and accepting the imposition of an American Dream-style vision of China's role in the world, i.e., the loss of China's great civilization to American-controlled modernization and the transformation of China into a subordinate

¹Piketty is not a Marxist economist, but perhaps one can call him an honest mainstream economist.

and dependent country, a mere junior partner, a vast glorified workshop really, on the periphery of global capitalism.

The compulsive need of the US ruling class to destroy any alternative aspiration to the American Dream—the real content of which is unrestrained, predatory global capitalism—shows that the United States cannot achieve dominance under peaceful and forthright competition. It is a wounded but cunning animal that tries to eliminate its rivals by resorting to violence and subversion. The very fact that imperialism must work so hard to co-opt the socialist countries shows that history has not ended with imperialism's complete and final victory. The world is still faced with the momentous ideological and practical alternatives between socialism and capitalism, between peaceful, mutually beneficial development and exploitive, war-mongering imperialism. The existence of this choice indisputably reveals that neither history nor ideology has ended.

Let there be no mistake regarding this fundamental issue: the capitalist world is forced to confront the problem of its replacement by socialism because, far from having achieved final victory, the imperialist world order is clearly failing. A progressive alternative to global capitalism must be established before it is too late to prevent the catastrophic economic, environmental, and social devastation and civilizational regression that threatens human societies around the world. The choice between socialism and capitalism is still the most important question facing humanity, because it will determine whether the world historical crisis of capitalist society will be resolved by advancing to a higher level of civilization or regressing into poverty, fascism, and atavistic barbarism.

The world is undergoing a crisis composed of at least two interrelated predicaments that affect all humanity, both the exploited and the exploiters. The two predicaments are: 1) the failure of global capitalism as exemplified by the world economic depression, the increasing gap between the affluent and the destitute, and the prevalence of imperialist wars, and 2) the approaching limits to capitalist exploitation, pollution, and destruction of nature in the form of the planetary environmental crisis. The effects of the environmental crisis are well known. And if there is any doubt that capitalism has failed to meet human needs, let us take a moment to consider to the state of humankind in this capitalist world. Out of a world population of about 7 billion, there are approximately 2.6 billion people who must try to live on less than \$2 per day (United Nations 2010, 96); the average adult has only about six years of formal schooling (*Nation Master* 2011); out of a global labor force of 3.37 billion, 8.3% are unemployed;² and about 852 million people suffer from hunger (*Hunger Notes* 2014). Is this a world that is developing people's abilities and meeting human needs?

It must be acknowledged that even in the United States there are growing numbers of people who are willing to question capitalism, despite a lifetime of indoctrination in the American Dream. A poll conducted in the United States in 2009 found that 20% of Americans thought socialism was better than capitalism, 53% believed that capitalism was better, and 27% were undecided (*Rasmussen Reports* 2009). A single poll reveals nothing conclusive, and it is not really clear what Americans mean by socialism beyond more government intervention in the economy. Still these figures are more favorable toward socialism than one would expect from the most virulently antisocialist of all the advanced countries. Polls also show that about 70% of Americans support a market economy. This is much higher than the 53% who unequivocally support capitalism (*Rasmussen Reports* 2009). Given that Americans are less fond of capitalism than the market, perhaps they could be educated to accept what has long been understood in China: that the market is not the exclusive domain of capitalism, and it can function more

²Data from two indicators—"labor force" and "unemployment rate"—which were included in *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency 2014), under "world: economy" list.

effectively and more justly when it is given a socialist-orientation (Yang 2007, 61–79). Even more surprisingly, a poll conducted in March 2011 revealed that 11% of Americans believe communism is “morally superior” to the United States’ current political and economic system, and 13% aren’t sure. Furthermore, 10% think that communism is better for the middle class, and 10% are undecided (*Rasmussen Reports* 2011). These numbers are small in absolute terms, but they are surprisingly high for a country that is still the center of world imperialism, a country where the words “socialism” and “communism” have been vilified for decades. Perhaps there is hope that the American people will one-day reach the conclusion that the true American Dream is compatible with socialism after all. One of the crucial ironies of the American system and the American Dream ideology is that the pursuit of unfettered capitalism has led to vast inequalities that have increasingly narrowed opportunities for full realization of the American Dream to a smaller and smaller elite. Living conditions would be even worse if America had not adopted some nascent socialist measures such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other elements of the welfare state. This indicates that the American Dream, in the sense of common prosperity, cannot be realized unless it constructs a full-fledged socialist sector and greatly curtails capitalism.

The Chinese Dream in Practice

The Chinese Dream is the socialist dream of rejuvenating the Chinese nation by building independence, happiness, and common prosperity for all of her people. It must be said that over the past several decades China has made excellent progress in achieving the Chinese Dream. China’s tremendous development stands in sharp contrast to the United States, which over the past 40 years has seen the pursuit of the American Dream thwarted by declining socioeconomic conditions affecting all but the upper 10% of the population. China by contrast is not merely surviving; it is thriving. China’s economic achievements have been called “the single most stunning economic event of the 20th Century” (Basu and Bandara 2009, 213), and this assessment can be extended into the twenty-first century despite China’s slowing growth. One often hears the claim that China has enjoyed the largest, sustained economic expansion in human history. There is some evidence to support this. Angus Maddison’s monumental work on the growth of the world economy shows that in the period 1973 to 2001 the average annual compound growth rate of China’s GDP, at 6.72%, was by far the highest of any major economy—including the United States (2.94), Japan (2.71), India (5.12), and the former USSR (−0.42) and more than double the world average of 3.05%. For the period 1950 to 1973, however, Maddison shows a 9.29% growth rate for Japan, which far outstrips China (5.02) during the same period, the United States (3.93), India (3.54), the USSR (4.84), and the world average (4.90) (see table 8b: “Rate of growth of world GDP, countries and regional totals, 1–2001 AD” in Maddison 2006, 640). Perhaps it is actually Japan that has enjoyed the most impressive growth in history. Maddison’s figures for China are more impressive when we limit our focus to the reform and opening up period from 1978 onward. In the period 1978 to 2003, China’s average annual growth rate was 7.85% compared to 2.53 for Japan, 2.94 for the United States, 5.28 for India, and −0.40 for the USSR/Former USSR (Maddison 2007, 44, table 2.2b).

There are various ways to present the numbers in order to make Chinese or Japanese growth look more or less impressive, but it is indisputable that China’s growth is among the most rapid and extensive in history. Roughly 30 years after the beginning of reform and opening up in 1978, China became the second largest economy in the world, and it will soon displace the United States as the largest economy, if it has not already done so. Indeed, in September 2014, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released an estimate that China’s GDP will reach \$17.6 trillion in 2014 with the United States falling to second place at \$17.4 trillion (*The Daily Mail Online* 2014).

China has lowered its poverty rate from 65% to approximately 4%, effectively freeing hundreds of millions of people from the scourge of poverty; it has transformed itself from a low income country into an upper middle-income country; it has become the leading producer and exporter of numerous important commodities, including green technologies; and it is playing a role in the global economy and world affairs that is rivaled only by the United States (World Bank 2012a). These are not merely abstract, statistical achievements. They have made a real impact on human lives. Today the new China is providing its people with opportunities for economic, educational, cultural and personal achievement that were unheard of in the backward and impoverished, semi-feudal and colonial society of old China. The main difference here is that China is progressing toward the achievement of the Chinese Dream, whereas America is regressing in the achievement of the American Dream.

This author's view is that China's progress is due to its choice of the socialist developmental path and the skillful adaptation of socialism to Chinese conditions, whereas America's regression is due to its stubborn refusal to adapt capitalism to better serve the needs of the American people. Of course in America's case this would involve at least a partial abandonment of capitalism, the abandonment of a society focused on serving private interests rather than social needs. By socialism, the present author means modernization through comprehensive socioeconomic planning aimed at achieving national sovereignty, industrialization, sustainable economic growth, and common prosperity, with all of these goals and efforts organized and harmonized by a ruling communist or socialist party. Many critics will argue that the contrasting approaches to development in China under Mao Zedong and under the reform and opening up period beginning in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping show that China abandoned socialism during the latter period and become a capitalist country. This view is based on a simplistic identification of socialism with the command and anti-market developmental approach of the Mao period with socialism per se, as if the limited use of market mechanisms to accelerate economic growth in a socialist context automatically entails a total capitulation to capitalism. In reality the Mao and post-Mao periods are complementary. Despite all mistakes, excesses, and setbacks, China's national sovereignty and the construction of a heavy industrial base were achieved during the Mao period. However, growth proved unsustainable during this period, and much of the population of China remained in poverty. The use of market mechanisms during the reform period built upon and far surpassed the economic achievements of the Mao period. China became the workshop of the world, a vast production and distribution infrastructure was built, and millions were lifted out of poverty. It is true that inequality and environmental pollution have greatly increased, but the fact that China has preserved the leading role of its communist party and a basic commitment to managing its socioeconomic problems with a view to achieving common prosperity for all Chinese, implies a higher probability of inequality and environmental devastation being alleviated in a constructive way under socialism with Chinese characteristics than under anarchic, winner-take-all capitalism.

This view is supported by the fact that other socialist countries are making great progress in improving the lives of their people, thus demonstrating that socialism, when properly adapted to national conditions, is the key to achieving not only the Chinese Dream, but any national dream that includes raising living standards and ensuring the people's happiness. For example, as recently as 1986, socialist Vietnam was one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita income below US\$100. After implementing a Chinese-style socialist-oriented market economy adapted to Vietnamese conditions, it has advanced to lower middle-income status with a per capita income of around US\$1,100; Vietnam's poverty rate has decreased from 58% in 1993 to 14.5% in 2008; it has met and in some cases surpassed a number of the Millennium Development Goals; and it is playing an increasingly important role in regional and global affairs (World Bank 2012b).

Cuba is another example of the successful adaptation of socialism to national conditions. The country has been called “a development model that proved the doubters wrong” (Glennie 2011). Cuba has achieved upper middle-income status (World Bank 2012c), as well as literacy, education, and health indicators that surpass many far richer countries. Cuba has made excellent progress on its Millennium Development Goals but has intentionally not attempted to become an important player in the global economy, rather it has focused on and succeeded at eliminating extreme poverty, minimizing the gap between rich and poor, and providing a modest but adequate standard of living for all of its people (Glennie 2011). Clearly the incorporation of a socialist component in a national dream is an important contributor to success.

Those who wish to denigrate the Chinese Dream often point out that China’s economic achievements have come at the cost of increased income inequality, as if that fact alone cancels all of the other benefits. Piketty’s work on income inequality shows that China is actually less unequal than some major developing and developed countries and far less unequal than the United States:

Chinese inequality increased very rapidly following the liberalization of the economy in the 1980s and accelerated growth in the period 1990–2000, but according to my estimates, the upper centile’s share in 2000–2010 was 10–11%, less than in India or Indonesia (12–14%, roughly the same as Britain and Canada) and much lower than in South Africa or Argentina (16–18%, approximately the same as the United States). (Piketty 2014, 327, figure 9.2, figure 9.9)

Piketty, who is probably the foremost expert on inequality in the world, shows us that China’s socialist market developmental model has thus far produced less inequality than America’s capitalist model. China has indeed made advances toward common prosperity, which is one of the key components of the Chinese Dream, but one must be careful not to make too selective a use of Piketty’s figures. They indeed show that inequality in China is not as bad as in the United States, but it is as high as the United Kingdom and is likely to continue growing. The challenge of reducing inequality in China will sorely test the country’s commitment to common prosperity.

One way to denigrate China’s achievements is to argue that the large differences in total wealth, military power, and geopolitical influence between the United States and China reflect favorably on capitalism and the American Dream and poorly on socialism and the Chinese Dream. Such an argument assumes that one can tell which system is better by simply comparing the most powerful capitalist country, the United States, with the most powerful socialist country, China. Politically, economically, and militarily, America remains the most influential, wealthiest, and most powerful country in the world. China is just a middle-income country, its military is no match for the United States, and it is not as influential. According to this view, capitalism is more powerful, and therefore better than socialism.

Besides resting on an ignorant and childish equation of might with right, this argument cites disparities that are falsely weighted to favor capitalism over socialism. It fails to recognize that China and America are at very different stages in their socioeconomic development, that China is developing more rapidly than the United States ever developed in its entire history, and that the United States has very likely passed the peak in its development and is now declining. Only 65 years have passed since the founding of new China. In that short time the Chinese people, led by their Communist Party, liberated themselves from the vestiges of colonialism and feudalism and successfully entered the primary stage of socialism; fought US imperialism to a standstill on the Korean Peninsula alongside its ally, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; rapidly increased the quality of its productive forces; raised hundreds of millions of people out of poverty; eliminated famine and pestilence; transformed itself into the workshop of the world; put men into space through its own efforts; and achieved the status of the

world's second largest economy. China today is poised to become the world's largest economy, a new global center for technological innovation, and a leader in the production of and conversion to green technologies.

By contrast, consider the first 65 years of the United States. It is true that the country began with an inspiring national liberation movement that freed it from a powerful British colonial regime, but at the end of this period the United States was still a cultural, political, and economic backwater subject to acute regional divisions and interstate strife, all the while practicing a primitive capitalism based on slave labor, exterminating the Native Americans, and heading toward a disastrous civil war. In fact, the United States did not become the unchallenged leader of the capitalist world until the end of World War II. So the development of the United States from its founding to the end of its first 65 years was actually much slower and far less profound than the transformation of China over the same number of years. A true examination of the disparities between the United States and China shows great success for socialist China and a relatively lackluster performance by the capitalist United States.

One might object that the comparison of the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to China of the mid-twentieth century to the present is unfair to the United States, because of the many advanced technologies available to China and the very different geopolitical situation that forms the context of its development. This point is well taken. But even if we compare the development of the United States and China over the same time period, from 1949 to 2012, the results favor socialist China over capitalist America—the Chinese Dream over the American Dream. It is common knowledge that during this period the living standards of the American people have begun to decline, whereas those of the Chinese people have risen tremendously; the American economy has stagnated, while China has gone from generalized poverty and underdevelopment to lifting many hundreds of millions out of poverty and becoming the second biggest economy in the world—and it will likely soon overtake the United States for the number one position. The United States still has the world's most powerful military, and its global influence is second to none, but if China can avoid the kind of disastrous capitalist restoration, national breakup, and societal collapse that occurred in the Soviet Union, and successfully transition from a middle to high income country, then socialist China may soon be challenging the United States in global influence; but it must be noted that as a socialist country, China is committed to influencing the world by setting a good example and using soft power rather than the barbaric methods of intimidation and military intervention.

Having made a successful break with capitalism and imperialism over 60 years ago, China today is neither an exporter of ideology nor of revolution. But it is a fascinating and inspiring example of peaceful, non-imperialist, socialist-oriented development, and it has the potential to become the most important example of a responsible, progressive, and effective approach to the world economic and environmental crises. China shows the world that every country has the potential to achieve peaceful development by adopting socialism, adapting it to their national conditions, and pursuing their own socialist dream. Nevertheless, socialism with Chinese characteristics and its ideology of the Chinese Dream face a contradiction that is similar to the one faced by the American system. China had to adopt market mechanisms in order to achieve the economic growth necessary for achieving the Chinese Dream of common prosperity, but marketization has also created vast inequalities and environmental devastation that threaten to deny future enjoyment of the Chinese Dream to all but a tiny minority of wealthy individuals.

Let us briefly consider the socialist, i.e. Chinese Dream, and capitalist, i.e. American Dream, approaches to perhaps the gravest threat facing humanity today: the environmental crisis, particularly climate change. There is no better way to compare and contrast the socialist, people's democratic approach to this problem and the capitalist, bourgeois democratic approach than to consider the efforts by China and the United States to build green economies. China's leaders understand

the gravity of the environmental problems in their own country and in the rest of the world. China's robust fiscal stimulus in response to the global economic depression included \$218 billion for conversion to green energies and technologies, railway infrastructure, and water infrastructure. This was the largest green stimulus program in the world. In the fall of 2010, China approved its 12th Five-Year Plan for the period 2011 through 2015. The plan called for massive public spending in the amount of \$468 billion to convert key economic sectors to green and sustainable energies and technologies. The targeted sectors included recycling, renewable energy, and green technology (UNEP 2010). Furthermore, China's green economic achievements are already considerable. It is the world's largest producer of wind turbines and solar energy panels, and it accounts for at least one-third of the planet's solar energy manufacturing capacity. China is widely recognized as the world leader on greening the economy, and its strong commitment to that course is likely to widen its lead in the future (Matthews 2011).

The United States, by contrast, has yet to develop a long-term national energy policy comparable to China's in its scope and ambition. Instead, the United States relies on uncoordinated, piece-meal projects and schemes proposed by this-or-that bourgeois politician or entrepreneur. In contrast to China, which relies on massive public spending and long-range planning to build key economic sectors, the United States depends on unreliable market forces and tax incentives to develop green industry. The high initial costs of green energy projects tend to discourage levels of private investment (especially in this time of severe economic contraction) sufficient to make the United States the world leader in the field. This is not to say that the United States is not a significant player in green energy and technology, but the country's political and economic climate promises that it will lag behind China for the foreseeable future.

US energy policy is also subject to shifting political winds and the bizarre, anti-scientific tendency of influential politicians and pundits to ignore, downplay, or deny the existence of climate change and the urgency of dealing with the environmental crisis. For example, as a candidate, President Obama promised to invest a relatively small \$150 billion in clean energy over 10 years. The bill that would have fulfilled these promises died in the Senate, and the dramatic rightward shift in Congress in the 2010 elections killed the prospects for passage of a comprehensive clean energy bill (Lee 2011).

In the capitalist world, particularly the United States, there are denigrators of China who claim that its economic development is polluting the world and is therefore responsible for climate change. The evidence indicates, however, that capitalism is ultimately responsible for climate change. From 1751 to 2007, the entire world released approximately 337 billion metric tons of fossil-fuel CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere (see CDIAC, n.d., "Cumulative Global Fossil-Fuel CO₂ Emissions."). The countries known today as the G-7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States) are responsible for releasing at least 170 billion tons of this CO₂, or 50% of the world total; the United States alone is responsible for 93 billion tons, which is 55% of the G-7 emissions and 26% of the world total (Lewandowsky 2013). Unlike the capitalist West, China does not have a long history of massive CO₂ emissions. This is an important point because there is strong evidence that the atmospheric lifetime of fossil fuel CO₂ and the resulting climatic effects will extend not merely hundreds but rather hundreds of thousands of years into the future (see Archer et al. 2009; Inman 2008, 156–58). Therefore, the countries that have been releasing high amounts of CO₂ for many years bear more responsibility for recent breaches of climate change thresholds than countries like China, which have become major emitters only recently.

China is doubtlessly emitting more CO₂ today than at any other point in its history, but this is still only about 1.5 tons per capita, a figure that is only slightly above the global per capita figure of 1.3 tons. By contrast, G-7 per capita emissions, at 3.2 tons, are more than twice the level of

China's; the US figure of 4.8 tons is more than three times China's level.³ China currently has high total emissions. This is to be expected, since all other things being equal, China has the largest population, but its low per capita emissions show that it is not an irresponsible or excessive emitter. It is in the advanced countries, such as the United States, where something is amiss. In these countries, populations are relatively low but per capita emissions are extremely high. American Dream-style consumer capitalism is clearly fatal to the environment, whereas the case of China shows that a country can pursue its national dream and undergo rapid development without producing excessively high per capita CO₂ emissions.

Conclusion: Essential Differences between the Chinese Dream and the American Dream

The foregoing discussion reveals the following basic differences between the Chinese Dream and the American Dream:

- (1) The Chinese Dream emphasizes creating social wealth for the benefit of all members of society; the American Dream emphasizes generating wealth for the benefit of individuals.
- (2) The achievement of the Chinese Dream promotes the growth of people's democracy; the American Dream serves the interests of a false and hypocritical bourgeois democracy.
- (3) The Chinese Dream is based on socialism's great mission to satisfy the material and cultural needs of human beings in an equitable and sustainable manner; the American Dream is a capitalist dream based on capitalism's goal of obtaining maximum profits for individual capitalists through the exploitation of workers, entire nations, and the natural environment.
- (4) The Chinese Dream is social dream that can be shared with everyone. It creates a dialectical balance among collective and individual aspirations and gives confidence, direction, and inspiration to a society that has already made great strides in overcoming the harmful legacies of feudalism and imperialism by establishing national independence, eliminating backwardness, raising living standards across the board, pursuing peaceful, scientific development, and working to achieve a highly developed socialist civilization.

The American Dream is an individualist's dream, which glorifies the private accumulation of wealth and the desire of the richest and most competitive individuals to defeat and rise above all others. It is a bourgeois individualist dream that turns human beings against one another and does poorly at uniting collective and individual aspirations. It is non-dialectical, and therefore unscientific and subjectivist; it is a delusion foisted upon the American people by a ruling class that knows its system is failing.

- (5) The pursuit of the Chinese Dream has led to severe environmental damage, but it has great potential to improve the environment, and this potential will remain as long as it continues to be a socialist dream; the pursuit of the American Dream is fatal to the environment, and it will remain so as long as it continues to be corrupted by capitalism.
- (6) The Chinese Dream can be embraced by all people and shared with everyone, but it will never be imposed upon them by force, because peaceful development is one of its essential components; the American Dream is bound up with capitalism and imperialism. History records many instances in which the American ruling class has tried to impose its dream on other nations through brutal wars of aggression.

³Calculated by the author from data cited in "Global Fossil-Fuel CO₂ Emissions: Trends" (CDIAC, n.d.), and "Ranking of the World's Countries by 2009 Total CO₂ Emissions" (Boden and Andres, n.d.).

- (7) The Chinese Dream is beneficial because it arises at a time of progress and optimism in China, and it seeks to continue and build upon these positive trends; the American Dream, despite its thin and superficial optimism, has an underside of voracious greed and avarice arising out of anxiety and fear of the future. This is because it arose from the poverty, insecurity, and desolation of the Great Depression and was designed to bolster a failing capitalist system.
- (8) The glory of the Chinese Dream is that its achievement will mark the complete triumph of the Chinese people over the legacies of feudalism, capitalism, imperialism and fascism; the tragedy of the American Dream is that it has always been marred by slavery, capitalism, racism, imperialism and war.

Nevertheless, both the American Dream and the Chinese Dream are faced with a similar contradiction stemming from the fact that both systems have promoted achievement of their respective dreams by encouraging the growth of inequality. China had to adopt market mechanisms in order to achieve the economic growth necessary for achieving the Chinese Dream of common prosperity, but marketization has also created vast inequalities and environmental devastation that threaten to deny enjoyment of the Chinese Dream for all but a tiny minority of wealthy individuals. The capitalist American Dream embraced inequality from the beginning, but inequality has grown so acute that vast numbers of the US population are excluded from full realization of the American Dream, and opportunities for achieving the dream are declining rather than increasing.

Despite the fact that many millions of Americans have been misled and ill-used by the purveyors of the American Dream, there is still a sense in which the Chinese and American Dreams are equally worthy and equally great. To understand this, we must focus on the best and truest sense of both dreams. We see this not by comparing the Chinese Dream with the false American Dream of the capitalist hucksters. We must find the true American Dream that lies sleeping in the hearts of the common people of America, and of all nations. It is the dream of common prosperity, a flourishing world, and genuine human happiness. This is none other than the socialist dream. Large numbers of the Chinese people have already been awakened to this dream by their revolution, and they are adapting the socialist dream to Chinese national conditions. Perhaps one day the American people will also awaken, stand up, and take charge of transforming the false dream that has been imposed upon them into a socialist dream appropriate to their own history and aspirations. When that day comes, they will finally realize the potential of the true American Dream and the dreams of all the nations of the world. For on that day, the Great Human Dream of emancipation and happiness will at last unite the American people with the Chinese people and all humankind.

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